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Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda*

POLICY ISSUES

COORDINATION OF CONVENTION SECRETARIATS

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

1. Agenda 21, chapter 38, paragraph 22 (h), emphasized among the priority areas on which UNEP should concentrate "coordinating functions arising from an increasing number of international legal agreements, inter alia, the functioning of the secretariats of the Conventions, taking into account the need for the most efficient use of resources, including possible co-location of secretariats established in the future."

2. UNEP Governing Council decision 17/25 requested the Executive Director to promote the coherent coordination of the functioning of environmental conventions, including their secretariats, with a view to improving the effectiveness of the implementation of the conventions.

3. Accordingly, the Executive Director has convened five meetings on Coordination of Secretariats of Environmental Conventions. These meetings, serviced by the UNEP secretariat, have provided a forum for UNEP to meet with both UNEP-administered and other relevant convention secretariats to discuss issues and allow for enhanced cooperation and complementarity of activities amongst the participant organizations.

* UNEP/GC.19/1.



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Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

(a) Acknowledge the important task assigned to UNEP by Agenda 21, chapter 38, paragraph 22 (h), and reaffirm the importance of UNEP's role in promoting and supporting cooperation and coordination with and amongst environmental agreements and their secretariats;

(b) Welcome the actions undertaken by the Executive Director to facilitate the relationship with the secretariats;

(c) Urge Governments as Parties to the relevant conventions to encourage the convention secretariats to continue to participate actively in the coordination process;

(d) Stress the need for UNEP and the convention secretariats to have the financial and personnel capacity to maintain an adequate level of coordination and cooperation;

(e) Encourage the Executive Director to continue to promote synergy amongst the work and activities of relevant environmental agreements and their secretariats as well as UNEP's work programme in order to promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in a most efficient and effective way.

## I. ACTION TAKEN

1. While the first meeting on Coordination of Secretariats of Environmental Conventions was limited to UNEP-administered convention secretariats and some observers, the participation in and the scope of discussion have since broadened to encompass other secretariats and include on the agenda a number of important issues.

2. The first meeting, which was convened in Geneva, from 28 to 30 March 1994, took the opportunity to discuss, inter alia, the objectives, scope and content of coordination of convention secretariats as well as several issues which were seen to be common to the secretariats and which might be elaborated at a later stage (UNEP/ELI/Coord.1/8).

3. The second meeting, held on the margins of the eighteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council in Nairobi, from 14 to 16 May 1995, provided an opportunity, inter alia, to reaffirm the importance and value of cooperation and coordinated actions between and among all conventions and international organizations focusing on environmental matters, recognizing that such cooperation requires human and financial resources. The meeting further recognized that UNEP would facilitate such cooperation and had the responsibility to coordinate UNEP programmes as approved by the Governing Council with the activities and programmes of all relevant convention secretariats, as approved by the Parties to their conventions (UNEP/GC.18/Inf.6).

4. From 3 to 5 July 1995, the third meeting on Coordination of Secretariats of Environmental Conventions in Geneva discussed a number of substantive issues including, inter alia, trade-related issues and Host Government agreements (UNEP/ELI/Coord.3/4). The next meeting, on 10 and 11 January 1996, followed up on the discussions of the previous meetings and introduced a number of new issues for discussion, including the Global Programme of Action to Protect the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities and Strengthening Compliance with and Implementation of Environmental Conventions. That meeting also broadened its participation to include regional conventions, providing an important new perspective to discussions (UNEP/DEP/Coord.4/6).

5. The latest meeting was convened on 4 and 5 June 1996 in Geneva and reflected the most ambitious agenda to date. From a substantive perspective, the meeting dealt with a wide range of issues including a debriefing on the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the implementation status of the Global Programme of Action to Protect the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, and a report on UNEP's work, in collaboration with the convention secretariats, on analysis of the effectiveness of trade measures and trade impacts of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

6. That meeting also discussed the processes in place for action on prior informed consent (PIC) and persistent organic pollutants (POPs), and the convening of an open-ended intergovernmental workshop on cooperation between the Convention on Biological Diversity and other international conventions on related matters. Additionally, the UNEP secretariat presented a proposal for legal capacity-building activities to be undertaken jointly by UNEP and the convention secretariats in selected countries (UNEP/DPER/Coord.5/5).

## II. CONCLUSIONS

7. The meetings continue to provide an opportunity for UNEP and those convention secretariats administered by it to deal with administrative and financial matters. This has been facilitated by the presence of appropriate senior UNEP staff members at the meetings to address outstanding issues in these areas. The meetings also allow UNEP to consult with the secretariats in the development of UNEP's own work programme. In that regard, the report of the fifth meeting notes in its paragraph 10 that the UNEP work programme for the 1998/99 biennium "...would be provided to the convention secretariats for comment after it was revised on the basis of the discussions in UNEP's Management Board of 6 and 7 July 1996."

8. The coordination process is proving to be an effective forum to discuss both difficult administrative and important substantive matters.

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